



**Edward
River**
COUNCIL

EDWARD RIVER COUNCIL
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
2018-2021

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Edward River Council is committed to supporting businesses and industry to start up, grow and prosper in Deniliquin and the Edward River region.

Edward River Council is located a short drive from the Murray River, approximately 700km south west from Sydney and 300km north of Melbourne. The municipality comprises the major township of Deniliquin, and six rural villages of Blighty, Mayrung, Conargo, Wanganella, Pretty Pine and Boooroban. It covers a total of 8,881 square kilometres and boasts productive agricultural land and beautiful natural assets.

After experiencing population decline from 10,156 in 2001, rebased estimates from the 2016 census indicate the resident population within Edward River has increased from 8,888 in 2011 to 8,951 in 2016.

The Edward River Economic Development Strategy (the Strategy) provides an economic framework to enhance the prosperity of Edward River through a distinct focus on business growth from strengthening existing businesses, attracting new industry, developing export knowledge, capacity and markets; and growing visitor markets. Actions are focused on forming or strengthening partnerships, allocating or accessing key resources and infrastructure and unlocking opportunities to various markets. It was developed to provide a decisive pathway to guide the Economic Development and Tourism Unit's activities for the next four years.

The Strategy was developed through extensive consultation with business and industry, community and business organisations, state and federal government departments and departments from

across the Edward River Council. Statistical information and analysis were produced by economic modelling software REMPLAN which utilises Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census data.

The consultation examined the changing business environment and with the guidance and support of the community members and stakeholders, developed strategies to embrace change and harness opportunities for growth, innovation and to forge a stronger and resilient community.

Advances in agricultural productivity and food manufacturing combined with the growth of global markets and the emergence of Asia as a global economic force, present substantial opportunities for productive regions. In addition, broader economic context guides a focussed strategy that will support local economic development.

Five key economic drivers were identified through the research, analysis and consultation undertaken throughout the development of this strategy. The five 'priority areas' include:

- Agriculture
- Food production and value-adding
- Freight and logistics (road, rail and air)
- Arts, culture and creative economy
- Population and visitor growth

VISION

Edward River is the centre of the Southern Riverina. Home to a connected and engaged community, driven by a diverse economy. We work together to lead our community, achieve our potential and embrace our future.

Deniliquin and the villages of the Edward River region are great places to live and visit, with a sustainable future. The community is resilient, and the local economy is strong. People choose to live here because it offers a great range of services and opportunities for a country town.

It's a great place for kids to grow up. They experience the value of being part of a community, life on the land and the importance of caring for the natural environment. Older citizens are valued, and they choose to stay in a community where there are integrated facilities to support them. Indigenous connection to Country is acknowledged and enriches the cultural and economic life of Edward River. Newcomers are warmly welcomed, and their contribution is appreciated.

The town centre is easy to navigate, park, walk, ride a bike in. Local businesses are celebrated and supported to grow and prosper, and the opportunities for businesses to start up or move to Edward River are well communicated. The region is actively growing and there is a diverse economy of agriculture, industry, commercial, retail and tourism.

Deniliquin and the villages have stories of their own to tell and this is reflected in the and distinct identity they project. The past is acknowledged and respected. The community is looking to the future and have made a collective decision to defy political and economic trends for regional towns in Australia.

LOCAL ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Local Economic Development aims to increase the economic capacity of a local area which, in turn, aims to improve the well-being of all residents.

Federal and State Governments play significant roles in progressing economic development initiatives at broader regional and national scales. Local government plays an equally important role, undertaking a range of activities and initiatives in collaboration with local partners to promote the interests of the region and underpin business growth, employment and training opportunities.

Working with other levels of government, businesses and non-governmental sector partners to create better conditions for economic growth and employment generation are key processes of economic development.

The Edward River Economic Development Strategy (the Strategy) will provide a framework on how to reach the desired future position. Actions are focused on forming or strengthening partnerships, allocating or accessing key resources and unlocking opportunities to new markets.

EDWARD RIVER IN THE WIDER REGION

The Edward River region is one of the most productive irrigation areas in New South Wales, and the local economy is driven by a strong and diverse agriculture industry spanning a variety of sectors. Over the coming 10 years, we want to diversify and grow agricultural production, pursue options for value adding and develop opportunities for domestic and international export markets.

Edward River Council is located a short drive from the Murray River, approximately 700km south west from Sydney and 300km north of Melbourne. Deniliquin is the key regional centre, providing services and facilities that are accessed by a broad population base both within Edward River and beyond.

With a unique natural environment and busy events calendar – headlined by the iconic Deniliquin Ute Muster - ensures that the region offers a range of exciting tourism and visitor experiences. Tourism is recognised an important pillar of the Edward River economy, and further developing key assets, including rivers and the town centre as well as public spaces, more events can be facilitated to support existing business, and attract more visitors.

Education is critical to helping existing business to grow and advance local industry. Increasing education and training opportunities within the region will improve employment opportunities for residents, especially youth, and support the development of a skilled workforce to meet the needs of local business and industry.

While Council will continue to support traditional industries, we also want to seize the opportunities presented by a growing arts and culture sector. Developing a creative economy will enhance the region's liveability for current and future residents.

WHAT IS DRIVING THE EDWARD RIVER ECONOMY?

Edward River's Gross Regional Product (GRP) at 2016 is estimated at \$566.7 million dollars, constituting 4.1 per cent of the GRP for the wider Riverina-Murray region.

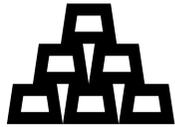
Propulsive sectors in the Edward River economy are largely derived from the region's productive agricultural land and its position along major transport networks. These are the sectors that, if grown and developed, have the greatest ability to create further benefits in the local economy.

Propulsive sectors of the local economy are identified through measures of backward linkages, regional exports, employment and value-added. In Edward River, the four key propulsive sectors are:

- Sheep, Grains, Beef & Dairy Cattle
- Meat & Meat Product Manufacturing
- Grain Mill & Cereal Product Manufacturing
- Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction
- Road Transport.

EDWARD RIVER ECONOMIC SNAPSHOT

\$1.223B



Total Regional Output

3,778



Number of Local Jobs

\$248.9M



Paid in Wages & Salaries

\$339.8M



Value of local supply chains

\$474 M



Value of annual exports

\$615.8M



Gross Regional Product

Figure 1 Edward River Council Economic Snapshot

CONTEXT FOR THE EDWARD RIVER ECONOMY

NATIONAL

- Roles and relationships with other nations is in a state of flux.
- The coming of the 'Asian Century'.
- Increased trade opportunities through new FTAs.
- Renewed on innovation and advanced manufacturing.
- New approaches to water management.

STATE

- NSW as the nation's largest economy with 33% of the nation's GDP in 2015-16.
- Recognition of the role and potential for agribusiness sector.
- Largest employing sector is Health Care & Social Assistance.
- Difficulties in providing infrastructure over a large area.

REGIONAL

- Focus on major centres of Wagga-Wagga, Griffith and Albury.
- Major tourism attractor in the Riverina Murray region
- Driving potential through agribusiness and transport connections
- Need for greater collaboration (including cross-border)

LOCAL

- Recent merger of the Deniliquin and Conargo Shires creating the new, larger, Edward River Council
- Stable but hollowing population base
- Location as a regional business and community centre
- Significant built and natural asset base

Five key economic drivers were identified through the research, analysis and consultations undertaken throughout the development of this strategy.

The five 'priority areas' are:

- Agriculture
- Food production and value-adding
- Transport and logistics
- Arts, culture and creative economy
- Population and visitor growth

POPULATION AND KEY EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

- The population of Edward River Council region is 8951; of which 4401 are males and 4487 are female.
- Rebased estimates from the 2016 census indicate the resident population within Edward River has been increasing from 8,888 in 2011 to 8,951 in 2016. The resident population age profile indicates a higher proportion of people aged between 20-34 years old which constituted 15.2% of the population in 2016, up from 12.9% of the population 2011
- The median age in Edward River is 43.8 compared to 37.2 in Australia
- The median household income in Edward River is \$40,870 compared to \$46,854 in Australia
- From 2014-2016 there was a decline in the number of businesses with a turnover less than \$50 thousand but a marked increase of businesses with a turnover of between \$100-\$200 thousand.
- The Food Product Manufacturing and Gas, Water & Waste Services sectors are the largest contributors to regional exports with combined regional exports valued at \$214.457 million
- The Food Product Manufacturing and Sheep, Grains Beef & Dairy Cattle sectors have the highest levels of local expenditure with a combined value of \$117.987 million.
- There are 3,778 jobs in the region. Health Care & Social Assistance is the largest employing sector with 577 of those jobs. In 2011, Agriculture was the largest employing sector with 515 of jobs.
- Edward River is a net importer of labour, with an estimated 391 people living in the region but working elsewhere compared to 687 people who work in Edward River but live outside the region.
- Edward River has been experiencing a declining unemployment rate since 2015 but has seen a slight increase over the last two periods. Unemployment is currently at around 7.7 per cent.
- A recent trend that has seen the hollowing out of people in the 20-34-year age brackets has reversed to a small degree in 2016.
- High output industries (manufacturing, agriculture and construction) are experiencing employment growth from 2011-2016.
- Edward River has a relatively low level of post-school qualifications compared to the Riverina-Murray region, however the proportion of the population with a post-school qualification continues to increase 2006 and 2016.

KEY STRENGTHS

Lifestyle on the Edward River and Billabong Creek

Situated on the beautiful Edward River and the Billabong Creek, Deniliquin and the surrounding villages are blessed with lifestyle, employment and investment opportunities. Deniliquin is an oasis of green on the edge of the Riverine plain, which stretches northwards in what is claimed to be the flattest land on earth – the beginning of the outback. The Edward River – or Kyalite River – is an anabranch of the Murray River and flows through Deniliquin's town centre. The Edward River is home to two beautiful sandy beaches - McLean Beach and Willoughby's Beach -both within walking distance of the town.

The Billabong Creek – the longest creek in the world – is a partly perennial stream of the Murray River catchment which flows through the villages of Conargo and Wanganella. Other villages and districts include Pretty Pine, Boorooban, Blighty and Mayrung. These districts are home to tightly knit farming communities and some of the largest farming properties in NSW.

The people who live in the Edward River Region have easy access to affordable rural and urban housing, excellent educational facilities, numerous sporting and recreational opportunities, a hospital and allied health services, clean air and an active and friendly community.

Market Access

Industry, manufacturing and business all have access to major rail and road networks. There is a system of local and regional railway freight networks that operate from Deniliquin, Tocomwal, Wakool, Moulamein and Swan Hill. The railway gauge is 1600mm and is part of the Victorian network. Grain haulage, bulk and interstate haulage and general freight are available to the major ports of Melbourne and Geelong.

The region is well serviced by a network of sealed roads. The Riverina Highway links Deniliquin to Berrigan and the Cobb Highway links Deniliquin to Moama going south and to Hay, Ivanhoe and Wilcannia going north. The Newell Highway is the major national Highway in the region.

Road trains are allowed on the Cobb Highway and the Riverina Highway from Mathoura to Berrigan, but not permitted to go across any NSW/Victorian borders.

Healthcare and social assistance

Healthcare and social assistance is a growing industry and it is currently the largest employment sector in the municipality. Significant employment growth should emerge as a result of the need to support an increasingly ageing population. There will be demand for additional retirement villages through to high level aged care services.

Deniliquin Hospital is a 61-bed level three hospital and provides acute and community health care services to the surrounding community. The hospital provides emergency, medical, surgical, obstetric, paediatrics and high dependency care.

Navorina Aged Care - a not for profit 50 bed community-owned aged care facility in Deniliquin with over 75 FTE staff - is currently expanding to create an additional 18 beds.

Since 1973, Intereach has provided Deniliquin and the Edward River Council with social services to support the needs of local people. The organisation has grown significantly and now delivers support for families, carers, older people, and mental health and disability services across Sothern NSW and Northern Victoria. Intereach is the Local Area Coordinator (LAC) for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Edward River Council has acquired land for retirement living to support increased demand for these services.

Education

There are three childcare centres, two pre-schools, five primary schools (The Christian School encompasses a high school), one high school and a TAFE campus situated in Deniliquin.

Conargo, Blighty and Mayrung all have small rural primary schools. All the schools in Edward River have excellent reputations as being friendly and welcoming and provide dynamic learning environments, supportive staff and engaging curriculums.

Located in the heart of Deniliquin, a recent \$6.2 million-dollar expansion has transformed the NSW TAFE campus into a Connected Learning Centre, utilising digital-enabled technologies to provide better access and a more flexible learning environment to support students and employers across the region.

Education is critical to helping existing business to grow and advance local industry. We want to increase education and training opportunities within our region to improve employment opportunities for residents, especially our youth, and support the development of a skilled workforce to meet the needs of local business and industry.

Retail

Deniliquin is the region's retail centre, drawing people from the surrounding villages, the Berrigan Shire, Murray River Council town's such as Barham, Wakool and Mathoura. As a service centre to the surrounding agricultural centre, Deniliquin is economically and socially important to a community well beyond the town boundaries. The sector is still a significant employer, accounting for 417 or 9.5 percent of the jobs in Edward River.

Like many regional centres, retail in Deniliquin is struggling against a nationwide downturn in retail sales and the surge of online shopping. Many of the towns heritage buildings being underutilized and in a state of disrepair, a moderately high number of shop vacancies and a limited product offer; and regional centres such as Echuca and Shepparton draw significant business from Deniliquin. The Deniliquin CBD Masterplan will seek to address the retail leakage and make it a more viable and attractive place to invest in and do business.

Manufacturing, light industrial and warehousing

Deniliquin is home to a thriving manufacturing and light industrial sector centred around engineering products for the rural and agricultural sector. Warehousing for rural products is also an emerging opportunity to take advantage of the crowding out affect that is apparent in Melbourne and Geelong, where residential growth is impinging on industrial and warehousing precincts. A significant number of these businesses are experiencing sustained growth and prospective investors have identified these opportunities. These enterprises will require appropriately zoned, investment-ready industrial land to facilitate investment and expansion.

Tourism (the Visitor Economy)

Tourism has become an increasingly significant component of the Edward River region's current and future economic profile. Although not a discrete 'operations specific' industry, tourism - or the visitor economy - makes a significant contribution to several sectors including accommodation, food and beverage and retail. The Shire's tourism assets have been shaped by its location on the Edward River, water and nature-based activities and more recently, by the artistic and cultural endeavours of its residents.

Deniliquin is experiencing significant growth in visitation. Ongoing and strategic investment in transforming traditional caravan parks into holiday parks is attracting families to stay and increasing the economic yield. Major events such as the Deni Ute Muster, now in its 20th year has helped put Deniliquin 'on the map' by attracting visitation from interstate and even internationally. Smaller events such as the Deniliquin Fishing Classic and The Cruising Nationals tap into niche visitor markets and bring significant tourism into the area.

The tourism offering in this region can be strengthened by the introduction of agritourism experiences, the development of arts and cultural assets and improvement not only in the way the region showcases its history and heritage, but how it tells its story of 'now' and what makes this region such a great place to be.

Agriculture - Food and fibre

Edward River is the centre of a major pastoral area breeding stud sheep, cattle and other farming activities including cereals such as rice, wheat and canola. The agricultural sector underpins the region's economy and is part of Australia's 'food bowl'. This sector accounts for 515 jobs within the Edward River boundaries.

Deniliquin can produce significant tonnages of high quality rice, due to the flat clay soils of the Riverine Plain. It is home to Sun Rice - the largest rice mill in the southern hemisphere. Rice was one of the founding industries for many irrigation towns in southern New South Wales and Northern Victoria. It's estimated that every \$1 of rice production equates to \$4 in flow on economic activity (Rice Growers Australia, 2017) In 2017, approximately 84,000ha of rice was planted in the in the NSW Riverina.

Cotton is increasingly being grown in the Edward River region. Many farmers have switched from growing rice in favour of cotton, due to higher (and often guaranteed) prices, the reduction in the need to use chemicals, employing more efficient watering techniques and the availability of cotton gins in nearby regions. Over one million bales of cotton were processed at the Southern Cotton Gin in Whitton in the Murrumbidgee region in 2017, while Auscott's Cotton Gin in Hay, built in 2015, is one of the largest in the world. Australia produces three percent of the world's cotton but is the third largest exporter, behind the US and India. More than 99 percent of Australia's cotton is exported.

KEY PROJECTS

Masterplans

A range of master plans and strategies are to be developed to provide guidance to guide future development of the Edward River region.

- Deniliquin Sports Precinct
- River Front Precinct Master Plan
- Deniliquin CBD Streetscape Master Plan
- Arts and Culture Precinct Master Plan

Funding has been provided to undertake high priority activities or works after the various plans and strategies are adopted by Council which will be guided by the Public and Open Space Strategies currently being prepared.

River Front Precinct Master Plan

The Edward River foreshore is situated in the heart of Deniliquin, however there is limited knowledge of these natural assets outside of the Edward River Region. Through the development of a foreshore Masterplan, the relationship between the river and the will be celebrated by clearly branding Deniliquin as a River Town.

The Foreshore Masterplan will address the following issues and opportunities:

- Wayfinding and interpretive signage
- Rest opportunities and public access paths for all abilities
- Shady seating options

- An amphitheatre for small to medium events
- Moorings for easy access to the CBD
- Compliant public toilets

CBD Precinct Master Plan

To beautify the CBD, stem the flow of economic leakage to other towns and build economic resilience, Edward River Council will commission the development of a CBD Masterplan. The Masterplan will address the following issues and opportunities:

- Streetscape upgrades using materials that age well and are easily maintained
- Significant tree planting to bring the gardens into Cressy St.
- Water sensitive urban design elements
- Urban art elements
- New seating
- Shaded rest areas at regular intervals through the CBD
- Safe and well-lit laneways
- Wayfinding signage to make it easy to get around
- Convenient parking
- Improved pedestrian and cycling connections in the CBD

Deniliquin Airport Upgrade Business Case

The Deniliquin Airport redevelopment is a critical infrastructure item essential to addressing the need for improved air services to and from the region, as well as supporting several agribusinesses and emergency services.

Deniliquin airport is in the heart of the Riverina, Murray and Goulburn Valley regions and has the potential to become a major export airport of fresh food from Australia's largest agricultural footprint. The Toowoomba airport provides a model for this, with a mix of freight combined with passenger services.

The export of fresh agricultural product into Asia may also allow the opportunity for commercial passenger flights into the mid Murray Region, including international arrivals and connection between existing airports in Albury and Mildura. Other possibilities for the Airport include a flight training centre to address an identified need to train more pilots.

This project could be a potential gamechanger, allowing international transportation only 40 minutes from the Murray Region's largest holiday leisure tourist hub (Echuca-Moama). A business case is currently being completed on the freight opportunities, and passenger flights are likely to remain a long-term opportunity.

Visit Deni Destination Campaign

The Visit Deni Destination campaign promotes Deniliquin's natural assets with an emphasis on river-based activities. It has been in market since February 2017 and aims to increase overnight visitation by 6285 overnight stays.

The experience pillars identified for families are camping, heritage and nature and bicycle trails, while couples 35+ (single or dual income, no kids) are attracted to the region's river activities, golf, food and beverage and events.

WHAT OUR COMMUNITY TOLD US

While the Economic Development Strategy (the Strategy) is a Council document, the underlying objectives of economic development is to service and support the community and businesses of Edward River. During the preparation of the Strategy, consultation with stakeholder groups was undertaken to understand the issues surrounding the local economy from the perspective of those people directly involved; local business owners, volunteer organisations, education providers and service providers.

STRENGTHS	BARRIERS TO GROWTH	COUNCILS ROLE
<p>Accessibility Located near the New South Wales-Victorian State border, access via the Cobb Highway and renewed focus on upgrade of the Deniliquin Airport.</p> <p>Irrigation Water Access to irrigated land is a key strength of the region, enabling more diversified and resilient agricultural production than would otherwise be possible.</p> <p>Natural and built environment Edward River contains several notable natural and built assets that can be considered as important local endowments. These assets can play a key role in tourism and liveability resulting in direct and flow-on impacts for the local economy.</p> <p>Regional liveability Access to health, education, rivers and relative levels of housing affordability</p>	<p>Attracting employees Jobs are available in the region, but businesses find it difficult to attract workers. Affected sectors include health and aged care, engineering and food production. Perceived liveability and availability of housing are considerable issues.</p> <p>Technology and communication While the NBN is in a small portion of Edward River the service is far from ubiquitous and inhibits business investment and growth. Where available, NBN speeds are not meeting expectations. There are significant blackspots in the villages and rural communities which inhibit innovation in agriculture and agribusiness, as well as presenting major safety issues.</p> <p>Energy Access to Gas is not viable without a key anchor industry, presenting a 'chicken-egg'</p>	<p>Business and industry Fostering a supportive culture in Council where businesses feel supported and can grow and thrive.</p> <p>Promotion Assist with developing a cohesive approach to promoting Edward River to raise awareness and create an identity around which local businesses can coalesce and influence the perceptions of the area.</p> <p>Collaboration Foster effective partnerships and connections between businesses, organisations and other regions. Effective collaboration ensures all parties benefit.</p> <p>Skills and education Support a skilled workforce by investigating and supporting skill development, education and training opportunities to ensure the region is more resilient to change, takes</p>

STRENGTHS

BARRIERS TO GROWTH

COUNCILS ROLE

situation, there is a need to review access to affordable and secure energy sources.

Climate change and water security

Regional water security is also identified as a concern. Climate variability and new farming methods and developments make forecasting demand difficult, however there is an identified level of threat to continued supply that needs to be addressed.

Perception of a declining population

The State government forecasts population decline with a strong ageing profile. While an aging of the population appears to be occurring, the overall population has been relatively stable since 2011. Concerns were raised in consultation sessions that the population decline which occurred during drought years have influenced government forecasts and continue to create negative perceptions of the region. The actual and perceived situation has direct impact on local workforce and the number of 'working age' residents who are investing in business and growing the local population with families.

Limited business collaboration

Consultation findings indicated limited collaboration between businesses. Rather than finding complementary offers to support

advantage of new opportunities and can capture value within the local area.

STRENGTHS	BARRIERS TO GROWTH	COUNCIL'S ROLE
	<p>each other there was often a response of direct competition.</p> <p>Incomplete tourism offering The region is known for the iconic Ute Muster. While there are several other smaller events, there is a need to expand the tourism base to provide a range of events and new tourism product for increased diversity in tourism market segments.</p>	

ASPIRATIONS FOR GROWTH

The current makeup of Edward River is a result of historic local activity and actions, broader structural changes in the economy and trends in population movement.

Edward River's population structure is like other regional centres - in many of these areas, the national trend of an ageing population is combined with a hollowing out of much of the 'working age' cohort. Lifestyle choices are a key driver for many residents who move to larger centres with increased levels of social and community infrastructure, while younger people seek out tertiary education and expanded employment opportunities.

The economic profile of Edward River is changing. Rising demand for services, efficiencies in production, the application of new technologies and uncertain climatic conditions are factors requiring adjustments within economies. While these changes may sometimes be perceived as negative, there are also significant opportunities for regional economies such as Edward River.

These factors are some of the matters that inform Edward River's economic development strategies. Given the trends in the local population structure, opportunity for diversification in key sectors and the council's geographic location, future economic development strategies should primarily be directed at bringing external money in to the region and subsequently bringing people in to the region.

Focusing on developing a resilient and progressive economy will include building on the existing amenity of the region, creating an attractive place for visitors and residents alike.

STRATEGIES TO DRIVE POPULATION GROWTH

Business and industry that focus on new product development, new market development and those which increase levels of technology and innovation will enable regional population growth.

Export focused strategies aim to support key industry sectors that have high levels of regional exports to bring in external money, spend money locally to grow other sectors, and in turn create value and employment.

Improving social infrastructure will enhance the liveability and attractiveness of the region. Proactive marketing and promotion of the region's attractions and amenity will aim at attracting new residents and families to live work and invest in the Edward River region.

These approaches aim to improve the prosperity and living standards of the region and, in turn, making the region even more attractive for a future population. Supporting a robust local economy aims to stimulate population growth naturally, attracting people to the region through new opportunities.

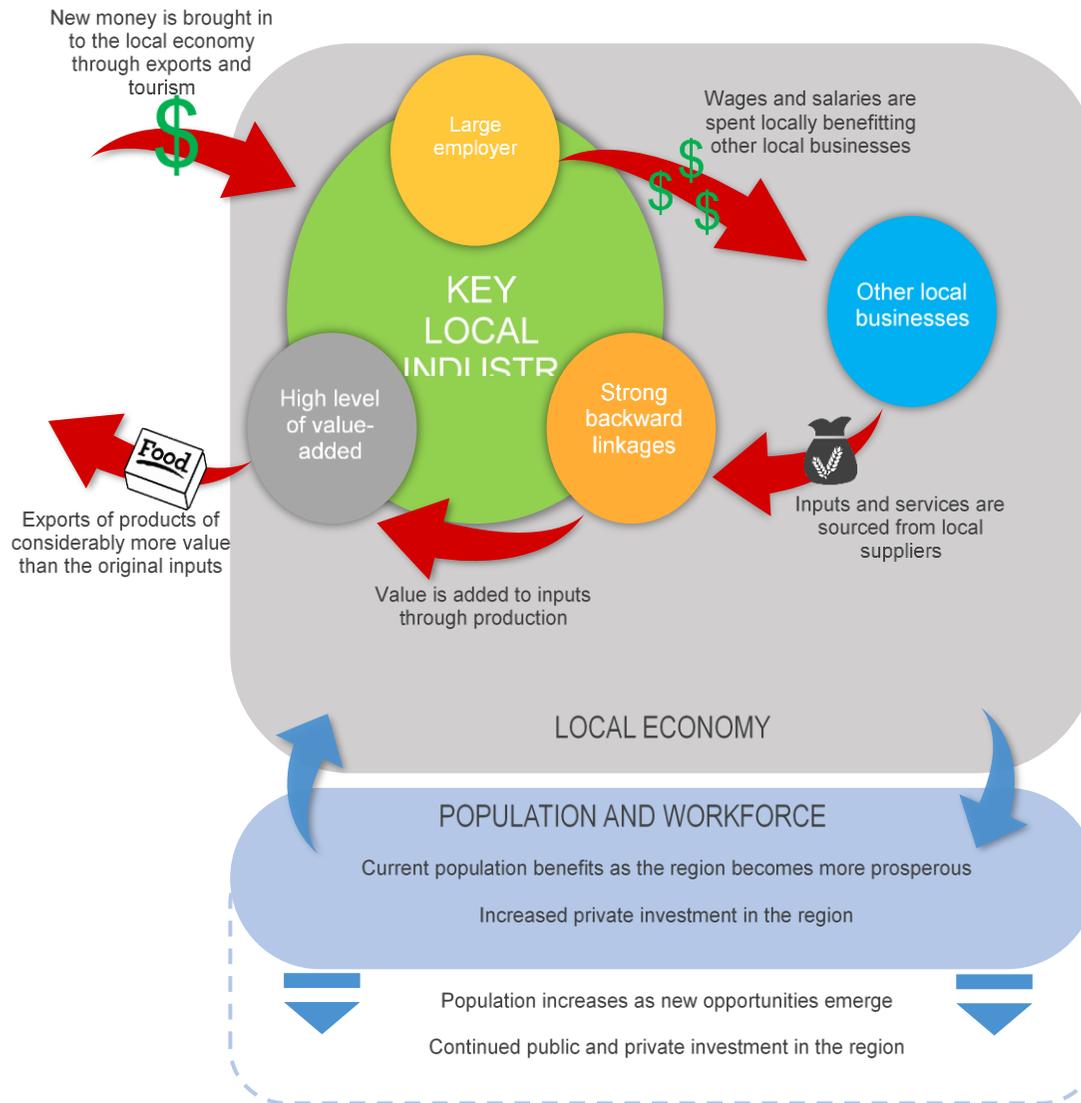


Figure 2 Model of productivity to drive population growth

KEY ECONOMIC DRIVERS

Five key economic drivers were identified through the research, analysis and consultations undertaken throughout the development of this strategy. These were selected due to their correlation with local propulsive sectors, alignment with policy directives from various levels of government, their ability to bring outside money into the local economy and to create an attractive economic and social environment for a growing population.

Five economic drivers will be the focus of the Strategy and of local economic development for the next 5 years, forming the five 'priority areas' for the Strategy's planned actions.

Focusing on a limited number of drivers will enable more progress to be made over the coming years. It is anticipated that advancement of these areas of the economy will have the greatest positive effect on regional growth and prosperity.



AGRICULTURE

Why focus on agriculture?

The Edward River Region supports a wide range of agricultural industries through a combination of dry land and irrigated farming practices. The diversity of agricultural production is supported by a favourable climate, good soil types, plentiful supply of large tracts of land and a secure supply of irrigation water.

- Agriculture is the major industry in the region with significant contribution to almost all economic indicators.
- There is a national, state and regional focus on agribusiness to leverage from
- Agriculture is a key asset in irrigation district and ability to grow higher value produce.
- There are opportunities to capture value from productivity and innovation.
- Council can facilitate ways to develop agriculture complementarily with education, research and tourism.

FOOD PRODUCTION AND VALUE-ADDING

Why focus on food production and value-adding?

New possibilities are emerging to develop new methods of farming such as indoor and outdoor horticulture farming operations and intensive farming operations. There are opportunities to attract value-adding industries to the region. Edward River Council is committed to assisting such industries to establish in the municipality.

- There is a strong existing food manufacturing base in the local area and wider region.
- There is significant potential to value add to local agricultural produce.
- New market and export opportunities to Australia, Asia and the Middle East provide the possibility of new money coming into the region
- Leverage Australia's reputation for quality and safe production methods

TRANSPORT LINKAGES

Why focus on transport linkages?

Edward River is well positioned to support improved freight movements in the region for export markets into Geelong and Melbourne. There is also an opportunity to capture value resulting from interstate and intrastate freight movements and take advantage of the crowding out of existing warehousing facilities in Melbourne and Geelong. The proposed Deniliquin Airport expansion will provide supply chain links to Asia

- Focussing on transport and freight aligns with state and regional policy.
- Improved linkages can exponentially increase productivity of agriculture and food manufacturing.
- Good transport linkages enable access to export dollars.
- The region is located strategically at the border of NSW and Victoria and national road transport routes.
- Benefit from the region's location in a broader tourism network.

POPULATION GROWTH AND VISITOR GROWTH

Why focus on population growth and visitor growth?

People form the workforce of the region and are the backbone of a thriving economy. Some sectors of Edward River's economy such as the health and aged care sector, engineering and manufacturing sector and the hospitality sector are experiencing severe and ongoing skill shortages.

- Growing the population will increase demand for local goods and services while also adding vitality to the region.
- People include both day and overnight visitors, who are a source of export dollars.
- Word-of-mouth can be a powerful way of marketing, so positive experiences for visitors will grow the positive reputation of Edward River region, and can lead to people moving to the region
- A skilled and educated workforce drives creativity and innovation.

ARTS, CULTURE AND THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

Why focus on the creative economy?

Creative industries can help transition an economy using knowledge transfer, technology, innovation and creativity.

- A thriving arts and cultural community contributes to the social capital, well-being and economic prosperity of a region
- Creative industries encompass a wide range of skills including design, marketing and software development
- This rapidly growing sector enhances liveability for current and future residents and makes the region more marketable

WHAT IS COUNCIL'S ROLE IN ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT?

Local government provides an important role in supporting local economic development and business development. As a central organisation with connection between local business, community and other levels of government, local government are often best positioned to drive partnerships and attract resource to support investment and local employment outcomes.

The role of local government is to assist in creating an environment where local businesses can grow and prosper. It is not the sole responsibility of local government to deliver sustained economic development to a region. Many diverse stakeholders are involved which includes government, business and industry, local community members and training providers.

In promoting economic development, local governments can leverage their key functions of:

Advocacy – promotion of regional interests to other levels of government and decision makers.

Facilitation – providing information, marketing or incentives; fostering partnerships and establishing local regulation.

Investigation – completing due diligence, feasibilities and de-risking for future investment.

Planning – aligning vision to local and regional plans; land use planning.

Service Provision – traditional or new services to support economic development.

STRATEGIC THEMES

Six key themes were identified to support the implementation of the Edward River Council's Economic Development Strategy. Edward River Council recognises that the private sector is the major contributor to economic development in the region and that it can facilitate and promote economic development by influencing appropriate investment, helping establish business and industry networks, creating a positive business environment and providing regulatory, planning and other support to business and investors.

ATTRACT NEW BUSINESS INVESTMENT

SUPPORT EXISTING BUSINESSES TO GROW

INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION

INNOVATION, EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

REVITALISE AND ACTIVATE THE CBD

MARKET THE REGION

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

The following action plan has been developed which outlines the relationship between the strategic objectives, the five key economic drivers and Council's function. The action plan also includes timeframes and quantitative measures to assess the level of success in achieving strategic objectives.

STRATEGIC THEME ONE: ATTRACT NEW BUSINESS INVESTMENT

Edward River Council is committed to encouraging job creation, attracting new business and capital into the region. This strategy focuses on attracting external investment, the creation of new industries, developing and maintaining a positive and dynamic business investment culture; and servicing investor needs and streamlining local government processes.

ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	TIMEFRAME	FUNCTION	MEASUREMENT
Seek funding of \$20 million to undertake the Deniliquin Airport expansion project. Project will in excess of 70 jobs during construction and 100 through implementation. Project includes construction of new runway, creation of business/industrial park and new services to support overall development	Economic Development NSW Government Federal Government Wagners Wellcamp	2020	Service Advocacy Planning Investigation Facilitation	Funding for project secured and project completion and operation
Ensure well-located industrial, business and residential land are available for businesses and individuals to become established within the region. Undertake land audits to identify possible residential and commercial developments.	Economic Development, Environmental Services	Ongoing	Service	Industrial, business and residential land and available services audited and mapped and available to investors by 2019
Attract new investment in identified industries including agriculture and value-adding, transport and logistics, tourism and the creative sector through the development of targeted investment prospectuses.	Economic Development, Regional Development NSW Murray Regional Tourism Destination Riverina Murray, South West Arts	2018 -2020	Service	Prospectuses developed and distributed

ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	TIMEFRAME	FUNCTION	MEASUREMENT
Actively attract private and public investment in identified industries including agriculture and value-adding, transport and logistics, tourism and the creative sector through leveraging funding opportunities.	Economic Development Department Premier and Cabinet, RDA Murray Murray Regional Tourism, Private investors	Ongoing	Service Advocacy Planning Investigation Facilitation	Increased investment into region by 2021
Create an open for business' culture by creating an Investment Attraction Framework/Policy for to streamline processes for large and medium scale business investment.	Economic Development Planning Infrastructure	2018	Service	Framework and policy developed and adopted by Council
Develop and improve relationships with private developers and investors by facilitating timely and coordinated pre-application meetings	Economic Development Planning Infrastructure Local Laws Environmental Services	Ongoing	Service	Number of pre-application meetings
Finalise and implement the business case for Seniors Housing Infrastructure to support population needs.	Economic Development Infrastructure Planning Environmental Services	2018	Service	Business case complete and investors identified.
Capitalise on the opportunities presented by the rollout of the National Broadband Network in the home business, health, education, and creative sectors to attract and retain new residents	Economic Development. Murrumbidgee Health TAFE, Schools, Interreach South West Arts, South West Music	Ongoing	Facilitation Service	Increase in number of home businesses
Take a lead role in regional and state planning initiatives to ensure ERC is well represented, acknowledged, understood and supported in regional strategies, plans and projects	Edward River Council Economic Development	Ongoing	Advocacy	Edward River projects included in regional, state and national plans and strategies
Work with Murray Irrigation Limited to finalise the Southern Riverina prospectus to promote recent irrigation infrastructure	Murray Irrigation Limited	2018-2019	Facilitation	Prospectus completed and easily available for investors to access

ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	TIMEFRAME	FUNCTION	MEASUREMENT
upgrades to attract renewed investment in agricultural activities in the region.	SunRice, Edward River Council, RDA Murray, Economic Development Deniliquin Business Chamber			
Develop an agriculture, food and freight industry plan to attract a range of businesses that are aligned with local investment goals	Economic Development, Murray Irrigation	2018-2019	Planning	Plan developed

STRATEGIC THEME TWO: SUPPORT EXISTING BUSINESSES TO GROW

Edward River Council is committed to supporting existing businesses to grow and prosper in the region. Studies show that up to 80 percent of investment in a region is contributed by existing businesses.

ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	TIMEFRAME	FUNCTION	MEASUREMENT
Provide greater business assistance to improve the capacity of local businesses to grow	Economic Development Planning Infrastructure	Ongoing	Service	Increase in employment by 2021
Develop an updated (and updatable) sector-based data-base and Client Relationship Management System (CRMS) for targeted information sharing and recording business interactions	Economic Development	2018	Service	CRMS and database purchased and populated Increased number of businesses reached via email communication Number of recorded business interactions
Improve links with business communities through weekly face-to-face visits to local businesses	Economic Development	Ongoing	Service	At least two recorded visits per week Understanding of local business conditions and confidence
Actively work with regional primary producers to explore diversification strategies, local value-add opportunities and international export opportunities	Economic Development AusIndustry AusTrade Sunrice, Murray Irrigation RDA Murray Department of Premier and Cabinet Central Victorian exporters Network Committee for Shepparton	Ongoing	Facilitation Advocacy	Conduct or facilitate a workshop to explore diversification strategies, local value-add opportunities and international export opportunities Determine key areas to address from the workshop feedback
Facilitate industry clusters within the region allowing for greater networking and	Economic Development	Ongoing	Facilitation Service	Development of an agri-tourism/agri-culinary cluster

ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	TIMEFRAME	FUNCTION	MEASUREMENT
information sharing among like businesses	Deniliquin Business Chamber, Murray Regional Tourism			
Work to secure trade opportunities for fresh produce from Edward River and broader Murray-Irrigation Region	Economic Development AusIndustry AusTrade Sunrice, Murray Irrigation RDA Murray Department of Premier and Cabinet Central Victorian exporters Network Committee for Shepparton	2019	Facilitation Advocacy	Export network/cluster developed and formally recognised. Trade opportunities and trade successes recorded year on year. Total annual increase in value of Regional Exports realised from 2019
Support opportunities for local transport sector servicing heavy road transport to expand in Deniliquin and Edward River Region	Economic Development Planning Infrastructure Department Premier and Cabinet	2018	Facilitation Advocacy	Creation of new jobs in transport sector
Undertake a biennial Business Expansion and Retention survey (BEaRS) to identify possible expansions, land requirements, and identify ways to improve Council services to business	Economic Development Deniliquin Business Chamber	2018 and 2020	Service	25% survey return
Host a series of themed 'Business Round Tables' to understand local business concerns, issues and opportunities.	Economic Development	Ongoing	Service Facilitation	Three round tables per year
Actively participate in in existing business networks	Economic Development Councillors	Ongoing	Service Facilitation	Attendance at at least six events per year events
Encourage and support new business events and educational opportunities	Economic Development Deniliquin Business Chamber	Ongoing	Service Facilitation	Increase in number of new businesses supported

ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	TIMEFRAME	FUNCTION	MEASUREMENT
	Business Enterprise Centre (BEC) Private providers			
Support arts, culture and the creative industries as a transformative sector of the community by providing opportunities for the production and presentation of works and performances in the region	Economic Development and Tourism South West Arts, South west Music Outback Theatre Edward River Art Society (ERAS) Yarkuwa Indigenous Learning Centre	Ongoing	Service Facilitation	Number of exhibitions held in Council buildings
Encourage local procurement and industry participation in Council's capital works programs and funded projects by hosting an annual Major Projects Summit	Economic Development Infrastructure	Ongoing	Service Facilitation	Business participation in summit Local contracts awarded
Support local businesses to develop workforce attraction strategies and tools to strengthen key industries	Economic Development	2019	Facilitation	Employment portal, lifestyle prospectus developed by 2019 Decrease in vacancy or unemployment rate
Develop a three-year Tourism Strategy to support the marketing and promotion of Deniliquin and Edward River Villages to build the visitor economy and increase visitor nights	Economic Development Murray Regional Tourism Destination Riverina Murray Edward River Accommodation and tourism operators	2018	Service Planning Investigation	Consultation undertaken Strategy developed and adopted

STRATEGIC THEME THREE: INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION

The development and maintenance of public infrastructure is critical to the success of regional economies. The provision of both hard and soft infrastructure is required to support local businesses to grow, attract new business investment and ensure the Edward River Region is a great place to live, work and play.

ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	TIMEFRAME	FUNCTION	MEASUREMENT
Seek new public and private investment to continually improve Edward River for residents, business owners, investors and visitors	Economic Development	Ongoing	Service Facilitation Advocacy	Value of new investment in public infrastructure
Seek Regional Growth Fund funding and private investment to facilitate the Deniliquin Airport Expansion Project as recommended in the 2018 report by KPMG	Economic Development Infrastructure	2018-2019	Facilitation Investigation Advocacy	Successful Regional Growth fund funding application
Develop a masterplan to support the rejuvenation and activation of the Deniliquin CBD	Environmental services Infrastructure Economic Development	2018	Planning	Masterplan complete and adopted by Council
Better connect the town with the Edward River by developing a Riverfront Masterplan	Environmental services Infrastructure Economic Development	2018	Planning	Masterplan complete and adopted by Council
Undertake road audit to prioritise projects that minimise pinch points and ensure efficient heavy vehicle movements from arterial road to point of delivery/origin	Infrastructure Economic Development	2018-2020	Investigation Planning Service	Road audit complete and priorities determined
Seek funding to restore the Deniliquin Town Hall to its former splendour and functionality to support arts, culture and creative industries and community events	Economic Development	2018	Service Advocacy Facilitation	Successful funding application
Undertake or participate in an energy supply study to explore potential alternative energy sources to drive economic activity	Economic Development Infrastructure Planning	2019	Investigation	Participate in study and investigate feasibility of options

ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	TIMEFRAME	FUNCTION	MEASUREMENT
Investigate and develop strategies to create housing opportunities that free up existing stock and create additional supply in appropriate locations	Economic Development Planning	2018-2021	Investigation	Housing strategy complete 2019 Two housing development projects are in planning phase (led by either Council or private industry) by 2021.

STRATEGIC THEME FOUR: INNOVATION, EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Education and training creates access to employment for all residents, addresses regional skill shortages and allows the economy to evolve and diversify. Collaboration to drive innovation and competitiveness in broader markets, education as an investment in human capital, supporting the development of a skilled workforce; and fostering a culture of continuous improvement within the business community will lead to new markets, new jobs and a strengthened local economy.

ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	TIMEFRAME	FUNCTION	MEASUREMENT
Identify opportunities for links between research organisations, industry and training providers to grow local economic activity	Edward River Council Economic Development Deniliquin TAFE Department of Premier and Cabinet (Export) Ausway College RDA Murray	2018	Investigation	Localised version of a pathways program is being delivered by 2021
Develop a network of industry representatives to focus on innovation and new industries in agriculture and value-adding	Edward River Council Murray Irrigation Limited SunRice Agri-businesses RDA Murray	2019 and ongoing	Facilitation	Network developed, and opportunities identified by 2019
Work with industry and use BEaR survey results to investigate/determine gaps in education and training provision to deliver new/improved curricular to address gaps	Economic Development Business Round Table participants Farmers Deniliquin Business Chamber Murray Irrigation Limited	2018 and ongoing	Facilitation Planning	Gaps and training solutions identified
Support local businesses to become export ready through export seminars, training and networks	Economic Development Department of Premier and Cabinet (Export) AusTrade AusIndustry	Ongoing	Facilitation	Two export training sessions per year

ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	TIMEFRAME	FUNCTION	MEASUREMENT
Attend and encourage attendance at forums. Conferences and workshops that assist Council to support businesses to operate in a global market place	Economic Development Business and Industry	Ongoing	Facilitation	Appropriate attendance at forums
Advocate for new tertiary and vocational providers to set up in region	Edward River Council	Ongoing	Advocacy	New
Support the Deniliquin Business Chamber to hold the annual Business Excellence Awards to foster a culture of continuous improvement in business	Edward River Council	Ongoing	Facilitation	Support provided
Support and promote industry and business improvement programs offered by Edward River Council and a variety of providers	Economic Development Deniliquin Business Chamber Business Enterprise Centre Murray Regional Tourism Destination Riverina Murray	Ongoing	Facilitation	

STRATEGIC THEME FIVE: REVITALISE AND ACTIVATE THE CBD

Revitalisation and activation of the Deniliquin CBD will achieve enhanced social, cultural and environmental outcomes. This will have a positive economic and social impact for the community, increased employment opportunities, business revitalisation and for tourism development.

ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	TIMEFRAME	FUNCTION	MEASUREMENT
Build on Deniliquin's identity as the economic and cultural centre of the Edward River Region by revitalising the CBD, connecting the Riverfront and providing spaces for cultural pursuits	Edward River Council Economic Development Environmental services Infrastructure	2021	Service Facilitation Planning Advocacy	Begin implementation of the CBD Masterplan, the Riverfront Masterplan and
Capitalise on and invest in the town's centre gardens and the Edward River riverfront for a range of tourism and civic events	Edward River Council Economic Development Deniliquin Business Chamber Community groups Event planners	Ongoing	Service Facilitation	Increased number of events in gardens and on the Edward River riverfront.
Restore the Deniliquin Town Hall to provide flexible spaces for people to pursue arts, cultural and community events	Economic Development	2018 and ongoing	Service Facilitation Planning Advocacy	Apply for funding through stronger Country communities funding in 2018 to undertake work. Deniliquin Town Hall restored and in use by 2021
Revitalise the Crossing Café and Peppin Heritage Centre to provide new and evolving gallery space, interpretive displays and modern visitor information services	Economic Development Infrastructure		Service Facilitation Planning Advocacy	Develop masterplan to improve the Crossing Café and Peppin Heritage Centre and apply for funding to undertake works
Implement the recommendations of the Deniliquin Public Space Strategy to improve town entrances, revitalise the CBD and provide wayfinding signage	Environmental Services Infrastructure Economic Development	2018 and ongoing	Service	Implementation of the DPSS started by 2018
Develop and/or support opportunities to showcase the Edward River Villages for events and community activities	Economic Development and Tourism	Ongoing	Facilitation Service	Four events per year held in the villages

ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	TIMEFRAME	FUNCTION	MEASUREMENT
Implement placemaking strategies to enliven vacant shop fronts, create pop up activations and encourage organisations to assist in activation of the CBD	Economic Development Deniliquin Business Chamber Edward River Promotions Advisory Committee	Ongoing	Facilitation	Number of activations in shop windows, pop up shops and activations.
Encourage traders to activate shopfronts and footpaths in the CBD by reducing red-tape for outdoor dining and merchandising	Environmental Services Planning Economic Development	Ongoing		Increased trading, merchandising and outdoor dining by 2021

STRATEGIC THEME SIX: MARKET THE EDWARD RIVER REGION

Promotion and celebration of all that is great about living, working and investing in the Edward River Region is aimed at attracting new investment, new visitation and new families to the region. The region is blessed with stunning natural attractions such as the Edward River, the world's flattest plains and national parks, as well as excellent health, education and recreational facilities. It is well positioned for industry expansion and investment with access to air, rail and road networks and an abundance of land.

ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	TIMEFRAME	FUNCTION	MEASUREMENT
Promote and develop the Edward River as the unique and essential element of the region's tourism offer, including passive, active and social uses of the river and its banks	Edward River Council Murray Regional Tourism Local businesses Accommodation providers	2018 and ongoing	Facilitation Investigation Advocacy	Increased visitation and increased value of overnight stays
Continue to partner with Murray Regional Tourism, Destination Riverina Murray and Destination NSW to drive visitation to the region through the Visit Deni Destination campaign and other initiatives	Edward River Council Murray Regional Tourism	2018 and ongoing	Facilitation	Increased visitation and increased value of overnight stays
Continue to partner with Murray Irrigation Limited, Deniliquin Business Chamber and agricultural industry representatives to develop a brand and prospectus for the Southern Riverina Region to attract agricultural and value-added industries	Murray Irrigation Limited Deniliquin Business Chamber	2018 and ongoing	Facilitation Investigation	Prospectus and associated marketing assets developed and regional branding used by local and regional businesses by 2021
Continue to work with RAMJO to advocate for water security, including access, affordability and sustainability, through an improved Murray Darling Plan	Edward River Council RAMJO	Ongoing	Advocacy	Increased water security in the RAMJO region
Attend promotional events to showcase Edward River Region	Economic Development and Tourism Local businesses Accommodation providers	Ongoing	Facilitation Service	Two events or expos per year

ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	TIMEFRAME	FUNCTION	MEASUREMENT
Develop, update, refine and make available investor packs, visitor guides, promotional footage and information on the Edward River website, Visit Deni website and social media platforms	Economic Development and Tourism	2018 and ongoing	Service	Investor packs and visitor guides developed and updated
Develop a biannual Open for Business newsletter including key employment statistics, case studies, project updates and disseminate using CRMS	Economic Development	Ongoing	Service	Two newsletters per year
Access and maintain detailed and up-to-date availability of land for residential and commercial developers	Planning Economic Development Infrastructure	2018	Service	Land audit completed and report available to developers/investors by 2019
Access and maintain detailed and up-to-date economic and demographic data to support business expansion, industry attraction and support grant funding applications.	Economic Development Planning Infrastructure	2018 and ongoing	Service	Purchase REMPLAN or ID Profile/Economy ID and use and disseminate information to support grant funding and business cases.
Continue to run an accredited Visitor Information Centre to greet visitors and encourage exploration of the region's attractions.	Economic Development	Ongoing	Service	Quality accreditation standards maintained
Investigate and implement strategies to attract regional returners from metropolitan areas; particularly young families	Economic Development	2019-2021	Investigation	Strategy for engaging with regional returners implemented by 2021
Develop a coordinated approach to deliver and promote events and activities in the Edward River, by developing an integrated calendar of events and ensuring greater use of key regional assets	Economic Development Deni Ute Muster Deniliquin Business Chamber South West Arts South West Music Outback Theatre	2018	Facilitation Investigation Advocacy	Calendar developed by 2018 Two new events attracted to regional assets

ACTION	STAKEHOLDERS	TIMEFRAME	FUNCTION	MEASUREMENT
Continue to support events such as the Deni Ute Muster, The Deniliquin Fishing Classic, and the Cruising Nationals that increase visitation to the region	Economic Development Planning Environmental Services Infrastructure	Ongoing	Service	Increased visitation to key events
Publicise good news stories about key economic development and tourism projects, new investment, expansion and retention utilising all forms of media	Economic Development Communications	Ongoing	Service	Increased log of media exposure
Build foster and maintain excellent connections with businesses, industries and government departments to ensure Edward River is recognised and understood in its efforts to create and facilitate economic development. Use the CRMS to record interactions.	Edward River Council Department Premier and Cabinet Department Industry Office of Regional Development Department Primary Industries NSW TAFE Murray Basin Authority NSW Water Murray Regional Tourism Destination Riverina Murray Destination NSW RDA Murray Vic Track Deniliquin Business Chamber Local businesses and industry	Ongoing	Advocacy	Increased recorded interactions with, businesses, industry, community groups, government departments and positive outcomes

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2018-2021

